

VZCZCXRO7137
RR RUEHDBU RUEHLN RUEHSK RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHKV #1302/01 2190738
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 070738Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY KYIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8224
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KYIV 001302

SENSITIVE SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INL/AAC, EUR/UMB, EUR/CARC AND EUR/ACE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UP](#)

SUBJECT: GUAM'S UPS AND DOWNS

Summary

1. (SBU) Over the past year, GUAM has seen successes, including the opening of an impressive new headquarters in Kyiv. However, GUAM has also revealed shortcomings, most notably a lack of consensus among members about the orientation of the organization. Moldova continues to be sensitive to Russian misgivings about GUAM and in 2008 initiated the disbanding of the GUAM working group on military issues. More recently, Azerbaijan has refused to supply biodata to the U.S. needed for Leahy vetting. If not reversed, this could force cancellation of U.S. funded programs in key areas. Ukraine and Georgia see eye-to-eye on GUAM and, from our perspective, are clearly the most active and committed members. A lower level of commitment by the other partners is undermining the organization. End Summary.

Azerbaijan Balks at Leahy Vetting

2. (SBU) The Organization of Democracy and Economic Development - GUAM - consists of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. The GUAM Secretariat has made strides in the past two years in implementing the standards, methods of communication and overall management befitting an international organization. Increasing USG assistance has supported this, largely through the US-GUAM Framework Program targeted at the Working Group on Law Enforcement.

3. (SBU) However, the future of USG law enforcement assistance to GUAM is in doubt, due to the spillover of a bilateral issue between the USG and Azerbaijan related to Leahy vetting. Azerbaijan refuses to provide personal data required, which it apparently regards as intrusive. Absent receipt of appropriate biodata, planned U.S.-funded training, including a two-year program focused on counter-narcotics and counter-trafficking and a long-awaited program on training for Border Guard services would have to be cancelled, and the funding redirected. While the parties are working to resolve this issue, it highlights gaps in GUAM's development as an international organization.

A New Headquarters

4. (U) The history of USG cooperation with GUAM dates back almost a decade, but only in the last 24 months has the organization taken ownership of its mission and future. The Secretariat has implemented international accounting standards, a requirement when seeking additional donors, and has formalized its system of communication with member states. A high-point came in February with the official inauguration of the Secretariat Headquarters, prominently located on Independence Square in the center of Kyiv.

5. (U) The office space, provided by the GOU, is excellent and has allowed the organization to host a full slate of activities. This included a seminar on Nuclear Terrorism sponsored by the UNODC, an art exhibit by member states, and virtual and face-to-face meetings of the eight working groups of the organization. The USG provided funds for translation and telephone equipment and, most importantly, for DVC technology in the HQ and in all member capitals. (At

present, Azerbaijan has not installed its equipment, as the room it will be located in is under renovation, limiting the effectiveness of the system.)

Virtual Law Enforcement Center

16. (U) For almost five years the USG has provided assistance to a Virtual Law Enforcement Center (VLEC), a local area network established in the law enforcement agencies in each capital. The Center is designed to exchange information on cases and to study general trends. It has been used to actively resolve at least one human-trafficking case, to exchange information on narcotics and human-trafficking cases, and to produce a report on narcotics trafficking in the region. VLEC reached a major milestone in December on the margins of the OSCE Ministerial in Helsinki, when the FMs of the member states agreed on a Protocol that would allow the countries to exchange classified material. Further information on the organization's structure can be found on the organization's web page: <http://www.guam-organization.org>

Divergences on Russia, other issues

17. (SBU) Despite this progress, the effectiveness of the Secretariat is limited by its role as coordinator, and not policymaker, a reflection of the varying goals of the member states. The member countries have strong convergence on issues like tourism and trade facilitation, but there has always been an underlying concern about the organization's role vis-a-vis Russia, which resulted in a decision (at the behest of Moldova) at the Batumi 2008 GUAM Summit

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to disband the GUAM working group on military and political cooperation, and focus on economic and social issues. This decision tracked with the Organization's attempts to better define their mission, but also illustrates the fragility of the union of the members.

Comment

18. (SBU) GUAM operates on consensus. The organization's effectiveness depends on the extent to which members agree. Ukraine and Georgia share similar perspectives on GUAM and, from our standpoint, are the anchors of the organization. Moldova and Azerbaijan appear less committed. Moldova's reticence is evident by the fact that it is often represented by lower-level officials at GUAM meetings. Azerbaijan's refusal to pass personnel data needed for Leahy vetting reflects its misgivings and, as noted, may cause the cancellation of U.S. law enforcement assistance that would affect the entire organization.